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RELIGION AND MORALITY ARE THE BASIS OF HUMAN FELICITY.

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TO YOUNG PEOPLE, &c.

Introduction to the Evidences of the divine authenticity of the Scriptures.

THE design in this number is to pursue the same general argument, by suggesting a different train of thought, in which I trust it will be made to appear, not only in one, but in every view, in which the subject can possibly be placed, that the scriptures are undeniably, a communication from God.

THE young reader will permit me to suggest, that the conclusions you will form from these combined numbers, are of unspeakable moment to yourselves. My mind has been peculiarly arrested to the subject for your sakes, and I cannot suppress the discovery of a strong desire, that your minds may be impressed and settled in a train of thinking and conclusion, which shall be of no little advantage to you in this life, and to your unspeakable joy and rejoicing in that which is to come.

To obviate more fully the divine authenticity of the Christian religion, the leading ideas will be in conformity to the following out-lines. I shall argue from the harmony maintained and running through the whole scriptures; from their preservation; from the moral tendency of the doctrines revealed and the duties enjoined in the bible; from the effect these doctrines and duties have produced in the lives of men; from the continuation of a church in the world under the circumstances which have attended it; from the experience of God's true worshippers, and their rejoicing and fortitude in view of the most solemn scenes, and under the presure of suffering; and from the confessions made by the most bitter opposers of the Christian name, when brought to sensibility in view of eternity. After a concise discussion of this summary, I shall take up and answer, the most plausible objections which may occur, and conclude the whole, with those reflections which may be deemed pertinent and fairly deducible from the whole.

LET us for a moment look at the harmony maintained and running through the whole of the scriptures. We may well suppose, that in a revelation from God there would be harmony of sentiment. An inditer possessed of infinite wisdom and goodness must be unliable to error, or the least deviation from self-consistency. In works of human genius, it must be expected there will be more or less incongruity of ideas. Imperfect minds have no security against transgressing the rules of rec-

titude. Fettered by prejudices, and partial in their conceptions there will be more or less clashing in their productions. No man, in the discussion of a great variety of abstruse and difficult subjects to any considerable extent, will maintain an entire harmony of thought. Men even of the most superior talents and the most eminent piety often communicate ideas, which do not perfectly accord with some other ideas they had suggested. Especially when we compare the works of different authors, on the same subjects, we find them to be accustomed to different modes of thinking. Their judgments do not accord, and in a great variety of instances their sentiments will be incompatible with each other. In perusing the bible we find no war of sentiment, but the most perfect unity strictly observed thro'out. The scriptures throughout were penned by different men, living in periods far distant from each other, variously educated, under forms of government and in stages of society of extreme disparity, and when customs and manners and the prevailing philosophy had experienced repeated revolutions. From Moses to the time when the apostle John completed the Apocalypse had elapsed a period of nearly two thousand years. Considering these men thus circumstanced, is it not unaccountable they should entirely harmonize in such a multiplicity of subjects, if they had not been divinely inspired? Look into the philosophical disquisitions of former ages, and can you find a similar example? Do not their writings abound with innumerable contradictions? philosophy has been a different thing in one period from what it has in another. Even rules and maxims of moral conduct have been fluctuating and varying. All will be convinced of this, who have been in any measure conversant with the history of nations. The whole philosophy of heathen antiquity is a combination of incongruity and heterogeneous views of men and things. If we allow our minds to ponder deliberately on the subject, we shall be under the necessity of considering the bible in this respect alone and by itself. The doctrines and duties specified and marked out are numerous, and yet there is the most entire agreement. Not so much as two ideas are there in the real spirit of them, but what correspond entirely. Does a work of such perfect unity look like the production of imperfect creatures? Is not this uninterrupted harmony a most conclusive argument, that the whole originated from one mind, and that every hand employed in writing the scriptures was guided by the suggesting influences of God? This argument is of great weight and the more it is contemplated the more the strength of it will appear.

In addition to the foregoing, it will be proper to notice the preservation of the scriptures through so many revolutions and changes as have varied the state of society in one age and in another. Some of the productions of antiquity, it is true, have reached us, and these are such as gratify the passions, and feast the pride of the human heart. Idolitry which is a most tempting sin was celebrated by the Greeks and Romans with the most splendid eloquence. It is not strange that writings of this description should be preserved, since they exhibit so much of that which is pleasing to the carnal mind. The preservation of the bible has been under totally different circumstances. The five books of Moses are more ancient, than any other works extant. And that they should be preserved is miraculous, since they uniformly condemn the wicked customs of all ages. Whatever disturbs the sinful heart,

and attaches punishment to guilt will forever be opposed by depraved minds. The wicked feeling themselves condemned by the bible, ardently desire to put down its authority. Accordingly there have been astonishing efforts to expel religion from the world. The opposers of the gospel truth have exerted their whole strength to effect their object. In the early ages of Christianity all human power was inlisted against the scriptures and the most desperate measures were pursued to render Christianity extinct. This was strikingly verified in the persecutions of the Jews in Palestine and of those which succeeded in consequence of the cruel edicts of Nero, Domitian and Decius Tragan. And how happened it that earthly power did not succeed in effecting its object? What had it to withstand? Christians used no carnal weapons against the inveterate foe. Why were they not crushed? because God was for them and shielded them by his omnipotent arm. The Lord who controls the wicked secured the sacred deposit under his pavilion. Christianity, therefore must stand. It hath stood and will continue in spite of all opposition from earth and hell. The preservation of these writings is a witness for God, that he views them as the apple of his eye.

The nature and genius of the christian religion distinguish it from all others. In the religion of Christ we have that which is not only superior to what may be found in any other system; but sentiments are disclosed, diverse in their nature from all other religions which have ever been offered to the world.

The religions of Neuma and Mahomet were but engines of stale policy, and were propagated by the most sanguinary measures. Their founders through intrigue rose to power, and by that power fastened on the necks of the vanquished the most servile submission to their religious tenets. What they never could have done by addressing their systems to the reason and consciences of men, they did by the strength of their arms. Though inherently possessing all power, yet Christ declares that his kingdom was not of this world. Instead of taking to himself the ensigns of royalty, his appearance was in the most humble form, and his whole life an unintercepted series of poverty, reproach and persecution. And by what means were men induced to become his followers? Not by proffers of wealth and greatness, not by motives of self interest, gorgeously attired. Inducements of this description were never so much as named. Far otherwise. They must follow him at the forfeiture of all the facinating objects of sense. They must submit themselves to a life of toil and a death of violent torture, or they could not be his disciples. As there was a most striking disparity, between Christ and the impostors of this world, so his religion was diverse from all their conceptions. Who but Christ has published a religion, which makes the sacrifice of himself the only ground of rendering that religion efficacious? Christ came into the world to give his life a ransom for many, and sealed his ministry by making his own blood the foundation of access to his kingdom. Do earthly sovereigns take such a course? Do kings and potentates ascend the scaffold and expire in agony, that the wretch who had been guilty of treason might be acquitted and be made to reign as a prince?

The duties marked out by Christ for his followers are perfectly pure, equally remote from pride and os-

tentation on the one hand; and ghastly and monkish austerity on the other. Humility must be a prominent feature in every follower of the Lamb. "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." Retaliation of injuries is incompatible with the gospel. "Forgive and ye shall be forgiven. The love of enemies Christ has made indispensible. "I say unto you love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them who hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your father who is in heaven." Repentance, faith, love to God and our neighbor are the duties imposed by Christ on his followers. This system while it udfolds a glorious way of pardon, exhibits an eternal rule of righteousness, and points to a future retribution which shall result in consequence of everlasting moment to every individual of the assembled universe. Laid in the scale with this religion, how light the greatest efforts of human genius? Heathens have approachedtheir gods with obsequious homage; and who were their pretended duties, but departed heroes, who in their life time had bid defiance tohumanity, and with unrelenting cruelty had triumphed in the spoils of the wretched. From vain idolitry let us look to Christ and hear his heavenly discourse.—"Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Take a combined view of this religion, mark its transcendant excellencies, the hopes it inspires, and the felicities it secures. Its object is adequate to every exigency of an undone world. While it humbles, restrains and reforms the soul, it holds out to every follower of the lamb, an assurance of eternal weight of glory. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Such is the nature of the Christian religion, as to produce conviction of its excellency in the minds even of infidels. It is impossible to conceive the least change in any doctrine or duty revealed in the scripture which would render it more perfect, or less liable to reprehension. When the bible has been laid aside and its authority contemned, vice has reared his horrid standard aud spread desolation. Legislatures have had recourse to this book for their ideas of jurisprudence, and have been convinced that no system of civil government could be sustained, if this main pillar should be removed.

The bible has been found most happily suited to form the minds of youth and to settle them in that course of action which most tends to their happiness and usefulness. So undeniable is the good tendency of the gospel that the vilest have no inconsiderable conviction on the subject.

The worst of men, who have a fondness for their children, are desirous to see them abstain from the sins forbidden by the bible, and punctually perform the duties enjoined, however abandoned they are themselves. The bible will in spite of men's efforts, beget conviction of its universal good tendency, and trancendant excellency. Supreme love to God is a duty made essential to happiness and salvation. And should we meet this requisition, every subordinate duty of iife would arrest our prompt and delightful regard. Repentance and faith so strongly urged, are connected with the highest happiness of society.—These exercises are inseparably connected with brotherly kindness and

charity. Prayer and praise hold a high place in practical Christianity, and when once the heart is tuned to these, there will be those concomitant virtues which exalt the human character, and have the most salutary influence on society. On the whole, the bible is its own witness. It is a book which commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

But considering, not only, the universally good moral tendency of the scriptures, but the actual fruits produced by this religion and she will appear in her radiant charms. In coming into this part of the argument we shall stand upon ground which cannot be contested. The great men of antiquity, though they propagated their doctrines with the utmost industry, never found themselves able to reform the life of a single individual. It is with willingness that the appeal be made to all infidels, whether on embracing their principles, the profligate have been reformed and become amiable. Can they name so much as one man who had been dishonest, profane, or hard-hearted, who, on coming into their way of thinking has become a downright good man? Infidels have made converts to their principles, but have they converted one man from the love of sin to the love of holiness? If one instance can be shewn, a new thing will be seen under the sun. But can this be said of the gospel of Christ? It can never be said, without doing violence to facts. Thousands in this country, who for years had been addicted to the vilest abominations, have been through the instrumentality of gospel truth reformed, and are now shining examples of the most amiable virtues. The bible witnesses its heavenly extracts by its benign effects.

The existence of a church in the world is God's witness to the truth of revelation. "If we receive the witness of man, the witness of God is greater." The preservation of the church has been miraculous. God carried her in his arms, thro' the flood, through Egypt, through the Red Sea, kept her alive through the Babylonian captivity and down to the christian era. The church of Christ has survived the bitterest opposition from men and devils. She has seen the rise and fall of nations. She has beheld four great monarchies rise one after another to the very pinnacle of fame, and then crumble to naught. She has seen revolution upon revolution, nation rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, the conflagration of cities, and the earth drenched in human gore. She lives a witness for God. And do you ask, has she survived by her own power, or the intervention of human aid? I answer by no such cause. It is true the mighty of the earth, at times, have visibly espoused her interests, but they have always left them worse than they found them. Generally the great have been adverse to the cause of the redeemer, and aimed destruction against his followers. But of what avail have been their attempts? They have operated to enlarge the kingdom, they were intended to destroy, and given occasion for God to shew himself mighty to save. Laying the whole together, we are under the necessity of saying, "this is the Lord's doing and marvelous in our eyes." E.

Illustrating, in an easy and familiar manner, the nature of several affections.

If the following extract may, with propriety, be admitted into the E

vangelical Magazine, the perusal of it may be of use to many who are never likely to be possessed of the work from which it is extracted.

Ev'n. Mag.

Fix your attention, for a moment, upon a large estate, which would supply you with all the necessaries and elegancies of life; whereon you might enjoy yourself at full ease, not wanting the least pleasure to which you might be inclined; be out of the reach of fortune, and above dependance; have it in your power to oblige your friends, and to keep as many of them as you would about you. Observe now: Do you find that you are approving, and do you esteem, with pleasure and satisfaction, such a possession, wishing it were your's? This emotion you feel in you towards it, is the affection of love. Approving such an estate, have you a certain confidence that you may obtain it? The brisk emotion you feel, is termed *hope*. Suppose yourself possessed of it, and that you find yourself lifted up with much satisfaction in your new circumstances; This is the affection of *joy*. Imagine yourself so possessed, and happy; and think, if this estate should be taken from you; the displeasure you feel at the thought is termed *hatred*. But suppose yourself in danger of loosing it; the disturbance you experience within you, is *fear*. Suppose it actually taken from you; the agitation you feel, is *sorrow*. Let us place the presence and favor of God in the stead of this estate. suppose God offering his presence and favour to you: Do you hear the offer with pleasure? This is *love*. Do you find yourself in a way of enjoying this offer? You feel the springs of *hope*. Are you possessed of God's presence and favor? Your affection is *joy*. Think of being deprived of God's presence and favour: You feel *hatred*. Suppose yourself in danger of loosing it: It is *fear* that works in your breast. Have you lost it for the present? It is *sorrow* that moves you. Now he who shall find himself affected with love and hatred, hope and fear, joy and sorrow, about an earthly estate, while he finds no such workings about God, is certainly an unrenewed man: While on the other hand, he who sits comparatively easy about eaarthly things, and finds the love and hatred, hope and fear, joy and sorrow, of his mind chiefly exercised concerning God, may have good confidence that his affections are renewed.

Walker's Christian.

"*Keep the heart with all diligence for, out of it are the issues of life.*".

Manage all your actions and thoughts as if you were just going out of the world, was a rule which a heathen prescribed to himself; and it is worth while for a christian to follow his example. First he ought to watch against all fretful and discontented thoughts. It is equally a christian's interest and duty to learn, in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content. Harbour not too anxious thoughts—you only anticipate evils which may never happen, or if they do will be accompanied with alterations you could not foresee. Dismiss as soon as may be all angry thoughts. Anger may steal into the heart of a wise man, but it rests only in the bosom of fools. Banish all revengeful thoughts. A spirit of revenge is the spirit of the devil, and nothing can be more opposite to the christian temper. Drive from your mind all silly and trifling thoughts; which only hold your mind in emp-

ty idle amusements, consume time and prevent a better employment of the mind. And indeed there is little difference between waking and sleeping dreams. Repel all impure thoughts which pollute the mind; which though hid from men, are known to God, in whose eyes they are abominable.

Lastly, with abhorrence, regret, all profane and blasphemous thoughts, which are sometimes suddenly injected into the mind; we know not how, though we may give a pretty good guess from whence. These are the thoughts we should carefully guard against as impertinent and mischievous intruders.

Abridged from Mason.

Mercy and Judgment.

In the last century a Scots gentleman of the name of *Wastraw* was remarked by all for his profaneness, but particularly for a sanguinary disposition, it being his study and delight to excite quarrels which ended in bloodshed. Having succeeded in forcing a neighboring gentleman to kill another, and finding him greatly troubled on account of it, he gave him this horrid advice, namely, to practice it more as the best cure; for that he himself had killed six men, that on the first occasion he was rendered uneasy, but by a repetition of such deeds he became quiet.

As Mr. W. was one day riding to a place where two persons had engaged to decide a quarrel by a duel, his horse stumbled on the side of a steep rock, and threw him down it a considerable depth, his sword falling out before him, *yet without any hurt!* His mind was greatly affected by this peculiar deliverance. The Lord broke in upon his conscience with great convictions of sin. On the day of his death, which was not expected by any, he was overheard to be wrestling in prayer, for a long time: At length the family, after waiting for him, and knocking much at the chamber-door in vain, were constrained to break it open; when, to their great surprise, he was found dead on his knees, a vast quantity of blood having issued from every passage of his body, and swimming about the floor* ;—an awful proof to the world, that though God will pardon the sins of his people, yet he will not suffer some sins to pass without a visible mark of his anger, and taking vengeance on their inventions.

* Charles IX. of France, the author of that dreadful massacre, whereby the blood of so many thousand Protestants at Paris was shed, died by an extraordinary effusion of blood from all the passages of his body.

[*Ev'n. Mag.*]

Conversion of a Farmer.

By a circumstance rather uncommon.

John Dickson, a farmer in the parish of Ratho, near Edinburgh, was long a stranger to the inexhaustible riches of grace. He paid no regard to the sacred ordinances of the gospel, or, if ever on the Lord's day he entered the church, it was more from a desire of ridiculing than profiting by what he heard. The word preached did not profit *him*, not being mixed with faith. In this dreadful situation was he, when, on the 10th

of March, 1790, his wife died, after bringing into the world an infant daughter. The good providence of that gracious God, who calleth the weak things of this world to confound the strong, had ordained that the nurse of this child should be a woman of exemplary faith, who "walked in the Spirit, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." "The carnal mind of the father still continued at enmity with God;" but he was, ere long, to be brought to a full conviction of his own unworthiness, and a delightful experience of redeeming love. The child being now about twenty months old, and beginning to prattle a few words, was one day sent for by the father, who was sitting after dinner with some of his profane acquaintance. To his great astonishment, the child repeated two or three times, in its infant tones, "O the grace of God!" These words made a deep impression upon the father. He began to reflect upon his sins, and the power of that grace, "which cleanseth from sin," so long the subject of his impious ridicule. The Holy Ghost "hath opened his heart," and now brought him, like a sheep that had been astray, into the fold of divine love. Since that time he has ever walked as becometh one "called in the Lord, bringing forth fruits meet for repentance." The words which, through the grace of God, became the happy instrument of his conversion, were the customary ejaculations of the pious nurse, and had thus been learned by the infant; So truly was the scripture verified, that "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings the Lord hath perfected praise."

Epaphroditus.

SCRAPS.

The power of religion.

Lord Peterborough, when on a visit to Fenelon, at Cambray, was so charmed with the virtues and talents of the Archbishop, that he exclaimed, at parting, "If I stay here any longer, I shall become a christian in spite of myself."

Anecdotes of Distinguished Persons.

Singular Providence.

When Mr. Abernethy, in his youth, was diverting himself, with a servant who attended him, upon the great bridge at Belfast, happening to cast his eye upon something at a distance, which catched his fancy, they ran off on a sudden; and the moment they had moved, the arch, upon which they had been standing, fell down; so they narrowly escaped being crushed to death.

preface to his Sermons, page 3.

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